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ARIZONA SUPREME COURT

Disciplinary Commission

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Disciplinary Commission Recommends Disbarment for California Attorney**

PHOENIX, The Disciplinary Commission of the Arizona Supreme Court has recommended that attorney Michael Taraska of Marina Del Ray, California, be disbarred for violating the Arizona Supreme Court's rules of professional conduct. It also has recommended that Phoenix attorneys Ramon Mendoza and Stephen Johnson be suspended from the practice of law and that five other attorneys be censured for unprofessional conduct. These recommendations, which are subject to review and approval by the Supreme Court, were filed recently in cases considered at the Commission's June 21, 2003, meeting.

The Commission found that Taraska, formerly of Phoenix, was found to have engaged in misconduct that included the willful violation of court orders, representing at different times opposing parties in a transaction without the consent of his original clients, acting in his own self-interest and against the interests of his original clients, filing frivolous pleadings, acting with the intent to embarrass and harass third parties, making false statements to a tribunal, disclosing client confidences, and engaging in conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice.

The Commission recommended that Ramon Mendoza be suspended for eighteen months. Mendoza was found to have failed to take diligent action on behalf of his clients, take actions consistent with the goals of his representation, keep his clients reasonably informed about the status of the matter, safeguard client property, properly maintain his trust account, and cooperate with the Bar's investigation of the complaints against him. The Commission also found that Mendoza had caused harm to clients who were barred from filing claims because of his misconduct.

The Commission also recommended that Stephen Johnson be suspended for six months and a day. A suspension of more than six months requires the suspended attorney to receive the Supreme Court's approval before he or she can resume the practice of law. Johnson was found to



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have failed to communicate with his clients, keep his clients reasonably informed about the status of the matter, take diligent action on behalf of his clients, safeguard client property, and cooperate with the Bar's investigation of the complaints against him. The Commission found that the length of Johnson's suspension was appropriate because of Johnson's voluntary efforts to remedy his misconduct and obtain personal assistance from the State Bar.

The Commission recommended censures for attorneys Gary Kazragis of Sedona and Claudia Mirescu, Marc Adair and George Vice III of Phoenix. Kazragis was found to have violated the Supreme Court's rules regarding office trust account management. Mirescu was found to have counseled a client to engage in conduct that she knew was criminal or fraudulent. Vice was found to have engaged in the unauthorized practice of law by maintaining his law office's web site while suspended from the practice of law.

Adair was found have failed to take diligent action on behalf of his clients, keep his clients reasonably informed about the status of the matter, charge a reasonable fee, safeguard client property, make reasonable efforts to ensure that his law firm has measures in effect that gave reasonable assurances that lawyers in the firm conformed to the rules of professional conduct, and cooperate with the Bar's investigation of the complaints against him.

The Commission recommended a censure for George Mothershed of Phoenix, who was found to have engaged in the unauthorized practice of law. Mothershed is not licensed to practice law in Arizona, and was disbarred by the Supreme Court of Oklahoma in March of this year. Because he is not a member of the State Bar of Arizona, the Commission cannot recommend punishment more severe than a censure.

The Disciplinary Commission's reports in these and other cases are available at the Attorney Discipline Unit's web site, <http://www.supreme.state.az.us/dc/matrix.htm>.

The Disciplinary Commission, whose members are appointed by the Arizona Supreme Court, is composed of six attorneys and three public members. It meets monthly to review recommendations for attorney discipline made by hearing officers, and to consider agreements for discipline between the State Bar of Arizona and attorneys charged with professional misconduct. The Commission can recommend such disciplinary actions as disbarment,



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suspension, or censure of attorneys, which are subject to final review by the Supreme Court. It can also order informal reprimands or dismiss charges.

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For more information, or to request copies of the Disciplinary Commission's Reports, contact Douglas Brooks at (602) 364-0350, or via e-mail to [DBrooks@supreme.sp.state.az.us](mailto:DBrooks@supreme.sp.state.az.us).